

REMARKS

Entry of the amendments is respectfully requested. Claims 1-16, 18-29, 31-36, and 38-40 are pending in the application. Claims 1-13, 18-21, and 23 have been amended. No claims have been canceled and no new claims have been added. Claims 31-36 and 38-40 have been withdrawn, whereby claims 1-16 and 18-29 are presented for reconsideration. Favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application are respectfully requested in light of the foregoing amendments and the remarks that follow.

1. Examiner's Interview

Although no agreement on specific claim language was reached, Applicants sincerely thank the Examiner for courteously conducting a telephonic interview on April 13, 2007.

2. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §112

In the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph as failing to comply with the written description requirement.

Claims 1-16 have also been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention.

In amending the claims, Applicants accommodate the Examiner's suggestions by removing the offending language. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the rejections be withdrawn.

3. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

A. Claims 18, 25, 28, and 29

In the Office Action, claims 18, 25, 28, and 29 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Shaputis, U.S. Patent No. 4,068,106 (the '106 patent). The amendment to independent claim 18 obviates all such rejections. Applicants submit that

independent 18 is allowable in its current form. Thus, claims 25, 28, and 29 are also allowable as depending from an allowable base claim, directly or indirectly, as well as on their own merits.

B. Claims 1-16, 18-29, 31-36, and 38-40

In the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-16, 18-29, 31-36, and 38-40 under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as being anticipated by Bobeczko et al., U.S. Patent No. 6,557,742 (the '742 patent). The amendments to independent claims 1 and 18, and the withdrawal of claims 31-36 and 38-40, obviate all such rejections. Applicants submit that independent claims 1 and 18 are allowable in their current form. Thus, claims 2-16 and 19-29 are also allowable as depending from allowable base claims, directly or indirectly, as well as on their own merits.

4. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

Claims 1-16

In the Office Action, the Examiner has rejected claims 1-16 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over the '742 patent in view of the '106 patent. Here also, the amendment to independent claim 1 obviates all such rejections. Claim 1 is now allowable and claims 2-16 are also allowable as depending from an allowable base claim, directly or indirectly, as well as each on its own merits.

CONCLUSION

It is submitted that the objections to the claims are resolved. It is further submitted that claims 1-16, and 18-29 are in compliance with 35 U.S.C. §§ 102, 103, and 112 and each defines patentable subject matter. A Notice of Allowance is therefore respectfully requested.

No fees are believed to be payable with this communication. Nevertheless, should the Examiner consider any fees to be payable in conjunction with this or any future communication, the director is authorized to charge any fee or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1170.

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The Examiner is sincerely invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it would help expedite the prosecution and allowance of this application.

Respectively submitted,



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